



## ABOUT THE MUTUAL DEPENDENCE OF SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGE IN EASTERN AND WESTERN EUROPE

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This contribution deals with the interdependence of Eastern and Western Europe in the present historical developments. It emphasizes the importance to distinguish analytically between the social and the cultural. Pointing out an increasing neglect of the social in theory and research particularly with respect to the post-communist societies of Eastern and East-Central Europe. As social structure is the one element which has been changing the fastest in these societies, the theoretical insights about its relation to culture are most significant. Given this point of the theoretical approach it becomes obvious that every assumption of a more or less coherent Central European culture or from another point of view post-communist mind must be misleading. Behind both one can suspect a too holistic understanding of culture. If we, however, assume that every cultural pattern requires certain socio-structural support, the post-communist situation appears rather as a set of different cultural dimensions than a cultural system homogeniously organized around coherent principles.

Since the collapse of the communist political system in Eastern and East-Central Europe at the end of the eighties, the exchange of people and commodities across the borderline formerly called the Iron Curtain has multiplied. The recent restrictive policy at the external border of the EU seems to slow down this development a little bit as far as the movement of people is concerned, whereas commodity exchange is still expanding considerably. As borders always indicate the state of

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the system which they surround (Langer, 1996a), one can assume that a lot of change is presently taking place in the societies on both sides. For the West the respective catchword is *European integration* and for the East *transition*. Within this frame people are anxiously looking for the directions in which the systems are moving. The most obvious changes seem to be economic. The *cultural* and in particular the *social* consequences of this policy have received much less public attention. The following will not only remind the reader that the cultural is related to the social, but also point to the mutual dependence of European integration and transition in the post-communist countries.

## CHANGE IS THE MAGIC WORD

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There is no generation in modern times – particularly not after World War II – which was not emphatically confronted with this sometimes threatening, sometimes promising expectation of social and/or cultural change. Still the speed of change was variable – sometimes fast and sometimes slow. Recently it has accelerated. At least for Europe (East and West) this is no exaggeration if we consider the importance the confrontation between the Communist Bloc and Capitalism had for this continent. To understand social change one must look into cultural developments and vice versa. It is not accidental that among the reasons frequently mentioned for social change is new technologies. This is something we would consider as 'material culture'. But here the emphasis is put on the social context itself, on challenges from the human environment like the appearance or disappearance of competing groups.

In this sense European societies have been experiencing social change for a couple of centuries, especially when compared to medieval times. Just a few examples of changes after 1945: a completely new social order in the countries under Soviet rule; further decrease of the population involved in agriculture in East and West; the shift from core family to various equal patterns of living together in the West; from work at assembly lines to tele work; from face-to-face to virtual communication; etc.

In contrast to the US version of capitalism, Western European societies became welfare societies. This term in short indicates a balance of power (a socio-structural arrangement) between the major groups of society (social partnership) but also a high degree of life security for every member of society. Seen from the standpoints of today with their catchword 'deregulation', it seems that the welfare society was partly just the price capitalism in this part of the world was willing to pay in order to contain communism (containment dividend). After

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all, Western Europe had some strong communist parties. In addition, in several countries the socialist parties also had considerable left-wing membership. The capitalist economy had to take this political situation into account. Therefore the disappearance of the Communist Bloc affects the social structures in Western Europe much more profoundly than in North America or in the capitalist societies of Asia, though the most dramatic changes are taking place in the post-communist countries themselves.

Now in Western Europe the economic weight is definitely tilting from 'labour' to 'business', the balance seems to be gone and the whole structure of social partnership is in question. Though the reason given for this development is globalization of markets, the welfare society most likely would not have been given up so quickly under a continuous communist threat. Parallel to the dismantling of the welfare society, the nation states of Western Europe are ceding more and more political power to the supranational organizations of the European Union. Though supranational associations are also getting established in other parts of the world as well (NAFTA, MERCOSUR etc.), nowhere is the nation state in question as much as it is in Western Europe. Whereas the extent to which Western Europe is reorganizing in macro political structures and labor relations is very much influenced by the disappearance of the Communist Bloc, in other dimensions social relations change in accordance with the mainstream of (post-) industrial societies. This applies to institutions like family, media, education etc. and interpersonal communication. Generally speaking institutions continue to lose hierarchical structure and communication is further specifying and fragmenting. The new rapidly expanding system of computer mediated relations is accelerating both.

Whereas Western Europe itself as a group of capitalist societies seems to be eager to adjust (tuning) its social structure closer to the US model, the former communist societies have embarked on a transformation (Srubar, 1994) where almost all guiding principles of the past should be abandoned – from state socialism to capitalism. If we look at the four dimensions – capital, power, institutions, communication – along which major sociological conceptualizations of society have been achieved, the following can be said:

1) With respect to capital ownership and market economy, most of the post-communist countries in East-Central Europe, can be considered in economic terms as consolidated market economies almost a decade after the collapse of communist rule. Primarily these are Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovenia. Others like Slovakia, Croatia and Ro-

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mania are still seen as transitional. The criteria for this ranking is the degree of privatization – the transfer of state-owned capital to private individuals. More or less parallel to this process

2) multiparty systems were installed instead of a one party system and democratic elections (sometimes with international supervision) were held (Szelenyi et al. , 1996). Both developments indicate a massive (formal) rearrangement of social relations. Instead of making arrangements based on solidarity with comrades, former socialist managers – many of whom now own companies – have had to develop relationships with shareholders, foreign investors, competitors, new types of influence groups etc. All of these societies have also seen the implementation of

3) new institutions, for example, the separation of administration, government and jurisprudence, but also the constitutional right to private property. Old institutions like the family sometimes get new functions (e. g. family enterprises, shelters against the risks of a market economy), but sometimes it is itself in danger through the withdrawal of governmental support (e. g. privatisation of education, restricting support for childcare). Finally, familiar

4) communication channels are breaking away in the transition without immediate replacement. This is true for most of the communication opportunities once provided by the communist party and other workers' organizations. Where to find a structure for communicating and settling conflicting interests is frequently a question left open.

To summarize the difference in social change between the societies of the European Union and the post-communist societies, there is, first of all, a difference between continuity and discontinuity. Though in Western Europe social change, as we have tried to show, is also accelerating, it is not yet disruptive as it is in the East. Here social relationships still develop inside familiar principles (e. g. competition, corporatism, private property) and institutions though with shifting emphasis; there almost every aspect of social life has been more or less rearranged during the past ten years. The tremor caused by the disappearance of the communist structures (most prominent in East Germany where it was called 'Abwicklung') is absorbed mainly by western supervision and informal social arrangements. Besides that the post-communist societies have also had to cope with time gaps unknown in the West. By this I do not mean the wide spread claim of historians and followers of modernization theory that Eastern Europe had already fallen behind the West in the 16th century, but rather the expropriation of private property by the communist regimes after World

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War II. Now all of these governments practice a kind of restitution of property. In countries like the Czech Republic it is more open, in others like Hungary it is rather covert.

Together with the (direct or indirect) sell-out of collectively owned capital to foreign actors and the transfer of capital to previous managers (or other groups of the so-called nomenklatura) it is one of the main strategies to establish new property relations. Legally restitution has some similarity with heritage in the West but it cannot be the same, simply because of several decades of communism. Maybe it should rather be seen as the resurrection of a social group (the owner class). Whether or not these three economic beneficiaries (foreign capital, managers, beneficiaries of restitution) of the communist breakdown can establish social structures similar to the class of capital owners in Western Europe has yet to be seen. In any case they are key constituents in the process of class transformation. Actually it depends on the extent and the efficiency of restitution whether one would have to speak of transformation or metamorphoses of classes. In the case of 'metamorphoses' significant numbers of individuals of the former nomenklatura in the short term have moved – or will move – into the new positions of a national capitalist class. Again this is without precedent in the West. The more the former nomenklatura is involved in the new ownership structure, the more the future of the respective country will depend on the quality of the criteria applied in the formation of this group under communism. The question is simply whether these people were the most intelligent, qualified, and ambitious (personal characteristics necessary to survive in the competitive environment of capitalism) or only "the dictators, the self appointed bureaucrats who collectively control the means of production, the agencies of coercion, and the media of information" (Davies 1986, 50). In the latter case they probably will not be able to play their new roles as capitalist owners or managers successfully.

It is obvious that social change in the post-communist societies (Kohn et al. , 1997) has been much faster during the past decade than in the countries of the EU. For example, nowhere in the West have institutions, and thus patterns of social relations, been so radically restructured in such a short time as in the former communist countries of Eastern Europe. With respect to mutual influence it is now rather the East which influences the social structures in Western Europe than vice versa. We have already argued that the extent to which the relationship between labor and capital has tilted towards the latter is hardly imaginable without the inglorious end of the communist experiment. Though this is probably the most obvious im-

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pact of the East on Western social structures, additional examples are not difficult to find. Changes in police organisation, defense, education etc. are very often a direct or indirect response to challenges from the post communist societies. Therefore it should be of utmost importance for the West not only to observe the economic development but also social changes in post-communist societies, particularly when future membership in the European Union is under consideration. The numerous cultural studies already available cannot be a substitute for structural analysis (social change), particularly when they are based on a narrow concept of culture, including existing studies that are limited to identity questions in these societies.

## CULTURAL UNCERTAINTIES

Though we emphasize the analytical separation between 'social' and 'cultural' aspects of human life it is not always easy to do so in concrete cases. The same holds true when it comes to the assumption of interdependence. What is valid in principle will see certain exceptions when it comes to details. Of course the cultural development in the European Union deserves attention. Especially after we have already claimed increasing mutual influence in social structure. Still here we will only give a few examples of new cultural patterns: the building of the superstructure of the EU is already changing the value of nation among the young generation (Langer, 1996b); the dismantling of the welfare state is producing antagonistic feelings between social groups (e. g. between age groups, between civil servants and the private sector), the determination to integrate Europe has resulted in new traffic constructions, such as airports that have to be reorganized because of the Schengen Agreement; illegal immigration and the fear of globally acting gangs is changing the security culture; the common market means more international products on the shelves; the systematic exchange of students inside the EU is producing an increase in language capabilities. Many more examples could be given and need discussion.

In the West the response to the emergence of the post-communist societies in Central and East- Central Europe is very controversial. On the one hand they are highly welcome, on the other hand they are met with suspicion and/or neglect.

To get a first access to the state of culture in the post-communist societies, one can begin with having a closer look at Ostkompetenz, which some countries claim to have. The term is usually not defined. What is often implied is the assumption that individuals from certain Western countries have a special ability to successfully negotiate with the Russians and

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other post communists. Such claims exist with respect to more or less all the Western neighbors, for countries from Finland down to Greece. The reasons given for such a special competence are usually derived from history. The Finns are supposed to get along better with Russians because not only did their country belong to Russia for more than a century, but during the Soviet time their economy was closely linked to the Soviet Union.

Another strong example for this claim is Austria, now a member of EU and for centuries the political and administrative center of the whole region from southern Poland to Transylvania in the east and the Adriatic in the south, encompassing almost all of what is now considered post-communist in East-Central Europe. A first challenge for the claim of a special cultural competence is that the average population on the eastern frontiers of Western Europe responds in a rather ignorant manner towards their new neighbors, though the proposition is very often fostered by the media, business and politicians. Contrary to the latter, social surveys show neither a particular interest in cooperation with post-communist countries nor the recognition of special cultural similarities (Haller/Gruber, 1996; Langer, 1997).

Besides the opposing empirical indicators, the claim of a special Ostkompetenz can also be challenged theoretically – at least in cases where the claim of competence is based on cultural similarity due to a common past. Communism has so extensively revolutionized the social structures that not much common ground can have survived in culture either. Nevertheless, considering the different levels and approaches of culture we have mentioned before, similarities will appear, but the question is how relevant they are for bolstering up the proposition of a special competence. In the territory of the former Habsburg Monarchy for example one can still find numerous pieces of architecture (palaces, opera and coffee houses, public buildings etc.) and technical constructions (railways, bridges etc.) showing a common origin. This material cultural heritage can of course release some nostalgic feeling with Austrians whose country was the only one of the Monarchy which stayed out of communism. But already a second look will show that this common cultural ground does not contribute much to cultural competence. First of all the artefacts have been incorporated into the national tradition of the countries which emerged from the Monarchy even before communism and every thread to the whole structure from which it emerged is often jealously kept out of mind. Secondly, the present architecture in these post-communist countries is quite different from that which is common in Austria



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today. Another case is, of course, when Austrian construction companies commission the building. In general, construction in post-communist countries is a question of what one can get cheaply on the market (shingles from the US, bricks from an Austrian company, roofing from Yugoslavia, maybe the engine for the block and pulley welded together oneself etc.) combined with black labor (possibly from the UK or Romania), a lot of individual improvisation and no need to bother about bureaucracy.

Another assumption is the common heritage of social conduct (the Viennese Court as the model for good life and behavior in the whole of Central Europe). And indeed occasionally one will find emphasis on formal manners (e. g. kiss a woman's hand) and etiquette reminiscent of the old days throughout the region. But this behavior survived only in certain pockets of the societies. It is well known that the communist nomenklatura at times liked to imitate the aristocracy. Foreign guests were preferably invited to old palaces where liveried personnel was serving seven-course meals. Also because of the fact that communist societies did not allocate labor according to supply and demand, officials on all levels tried to surround themselves with large numbers of helpers who also fostered servile behavior. Another social context in which sometimes old manners and mentalities remain is the family. Especially when a family was in opposition to the regime, the cultural heritage of the Monarchy helped to preserve identity. This cultural heritage can comprise values, images and behavior concerning gender relationships, raising children, relations between the generations, how and what to eat etc.

Though these and similar phenomena might come from a common cultural ground in Central Europe, it would be completely misleading to base it on the claim for a special cross-cultural competence on the side of Austrians, Germans or other close Western neighbors. Firstly, these cultural traits survived in only a few pockets of the post-communist societies and secondly, in the West most of them have in the meantime completely disappeared. Even for Austria, formal manners and etiquette are more a stereotype than a common trait of social life. The likelihood that it can play as a significant interface in the relations with post-communist countries is small. Of course one could go further and look for common habitual traits of which people are not so much aware but which are not less important for associating. But the preconditions for this are rather homogeneous and long-lasting common settings of socialization. It is at least questionable whether the Habsburg rule and the social exchange processes of those days could ever have formed a regional habitus distinguishable from people



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in other parts of Europe. The socialisation by national communities and later communist rule was most likely much more important in this respect.

Hence we doubt very much that the common political structures of past centuries had such a formative power that this would justify ascribing a special cross-cultural competence (*Ostkompetenz*) for Eastern and East-Central Europe to natives of Finland, Austria, Germany or maybe Italy. If such a competence exists at all in the West it is most likely with the numerous emigrants and refugees from the former Soviet Bloc. But we do emphasise that the (1) traditional dimension of culture is a factor in the post-communist societies which should not be neglected when dealing with them. We do not consider this as belonging to the (2) communist heritage, because the traditional culture has its roots in a previous era and is not seldom in opposition to the communist-culture. The latter, of course, still has effects on life in the societies under discussion and this on all structural levels mentioned above (property relations, politics etc.), but again we do not consider it as the overwhelming inertia from the past but just as one possible influence which can support as well as hinder the transition process. Neglecting it would be as fatal as overemphasizing it.

To narrow down the communist share in the present cultural situation we must recall the basic social principles of Real Socialism. The most central principle was the unity of property yields and political position. The advantages of property in the means of production could only be yielded by the individual in holding or subordinating to a political position. This had an impact on all other spheres of life, because defending or reaching a better standard of living could only be done through political means. Here we must keep in mind that in the West property rights are constitutional. The individual basically can acquire it by economic means as long as politics is moving inside the frame of the constitution. It is self-evident that the unity of property rights and political rights causes an unstable social situation which provokes tight social control, because otherwise every existing ruling class could be easily deprived of the advantages of holding property. The democratic voting mechanism which theoretically existed in the communist societies contained not only the risk for members of the *nomenklatura* of losing the political position but also the surplus value. The resulting political repression certainly had consequences on culture, which now have to be considered as the communist heritage.

The resulting uniformity and homogeneity of communist societies was clearly visible. Uniformity is immanent to every repressive regime, because it facilitates control. For problems

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and needs of daily life there, usually only a very small number of solutions were offered and that in a simple structure. Consequently large units were preferred to small. Large was also dominant in organisations. Their inefficiency together with ideological control resulted in a deep cleavage between the public (office, factory etc.) and private (family, relatives, friends etc.) spheres of life. The private sphere had to take on all the needs which, though intended for the public sphere could not otherwise be met. Under these circumstances a shift of all kinds of resources (labor, materials, time etc.) from the 'shop' to the 'home' was unavoidable. It goes without saying, all these transfers occurred free of charge or for a very low price. Thus the differentiation of society, hampered by the principle of keeping politics and property together, came in through the back door paving the way for the conversion of these societies one can witness today. The cultural impact of such a system was manifold: 1) dilapidated public property (factories, buildings, roads etc.), 2) a significant part of the population owning small second homes (cottages) in the countryside, 3) the importance of extended families and informal networks of all kinds, 4) a lack of interest in public concerns (e. g. environment), 5) a tolerance towards fraud, 6) an avoidance of open conflicts and 7) an ability to improvise.

Though the rapid conversion of institutions, organisations and social relations in general made the structural support for this type of culture disappear, one can expect it to occasionally reappear, because values and behavior usually have more inertia than social relations, not to mention the material side of culture which sometimes survives thousands of years. No doubt some cultural traits from communism will linger on under the new circumstances before they disappear, others will develop new meanings and still others will remain as they are (Laznjak, 1997; Mlinar, 1996; Stuhlhofer, 1997). Under capitalism it is, for example, unlikely that the cottage culture will continue. Not only will the rising land prices be preventive, but also bringing people back to work (offices and factories) at full capacity will not leave them enough time for such undertakings. Furthermore the need to grow vegetables and fruits on private lots has already disappeared with the introduction of a market economy. However, another communist custom is still very resistant to change, namely the tendency of employees to use company facilities for private purposes. The low incomes connected with an almost Western cost of living in many cases still make a second job necessary, and especially when the second job is an independent activity, equipment from the first job is likely to be used. This can be a source of conflict especially with Western manage-

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ment. A trait which has been converted into a new quality is the former readiness to deceive the state – which has evolved into a wide spread indifference towards white collar crimes. This mentality is probably one of the hotbeds of the so-called 'Ostmafia'. Part of this pattern is the lack of determination to enforce the law. Therefore even in cases where legislators have set regulations comparable to those in the West, they are not effective because of a lack of law enforcement. Finally we would like to give two examples where elements of the post-communist heritage have a chance to become successfully incorporated into the emerging new culture of post-communist societies. One is the ability to improvise, to solve problems under resource restrictions and other contingencies (Hadas/Vörös, 1996). The other example is the (with the exception of Poland) large agricultural business. If these firms are professionally run, they will certainly be a challenge for the small and medium-sized family farms in Western Europe.

Besides traditionalism and communist heritage there are two more dimensions which deserve attention when dealing with the culture of post-communist societies. One could be described as (3) loss of certainty in orientation, the other as (4) imitation of Western behavior and products. These dimensions are distinguished on the ground that they have different social origins. With loss of orientation we mean mistrust, no reliability of agreements, apathy etc. The establishing of civil society, market economy etc. sent a whole generation (those over fifty) into early retirement with minimum compensation or confronted them with other kinds of status deprivation. Some of them tried again and made it, but many ended up in indifference and anger. In business it is not rare that agreements are not kept and that the discriminated party still does not strive for justice – an anomic situation. Trust (Fukuyama, 1995) is certainly not entrenched in post-communist society. We tend not to see this as a heritage but as a new phenomenon related to disappointed expectations in the first years of transition as well as to an inability (or even unwillingness) to understand the rules of the new society.

Though imitation of Western culture has some limited examples in the pre-transition time, it could fully unfold only with the complete opening of information and exchange channels. There is the imitation of the acceptance of cars as status symbols, in the travelling behavior of the financially well-off, fashion etc. As in the dominant opinion, everything from the past is wrong and bad, Western styles and products have easy access to these markets. Besides that, communism really did not leave much to meet the needs of the people. But it seems that it is not so much the culture of their Western European

neighbors which is imitated but rather the American way of life as perceived through the mass media.

## CONCLUSION

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From the point of our theoretical approach it becomes obvious that every assumption of a more or less coherent 'Central European culture' or from another point of view 'post-communist mind' must be misleading. Behind both one can suspect a too holistic understanding of culture. If we however assume that every cultural pattern requires certain socio-structural support, the post-communist situation appears rather as a set of different cultural dimensions than a cultural system homogeneously organized around coherent principles. Actually it is not so much different from the logic of Western culture if we believe the post-modernists, though the content is definitely different (Alexander, 1994; Müller, 1995). The dimensions we have figured out exist more or less independently but have definite socio-structural prerequisites. They can be circumscribed as a) traditional or pre-communist, b) communist heritage, c) loss of orientation and c) imitation of the West. Empirical evidence for this can be found on all levels of culture – the mind (values, perceptions etc.), the behavioral level and the material culture – of the post-communist societies.

Though it makes theoretical sense to speak of post-communist societies, because social relations were set on new principles in a rather short term way, from our analysis we tend to suggest that we should not speak of a post-communist culture. Like with the 'post-communist mind' this would suggest a coherence which does not exist. Due to the lack of coherence it is also difficult to make predictions. The 'imitation of the West' is one factor only and it may not last. To assume that the post-communist societies will culturally adapt to Western Europe is not much more plausible than the opposite claim. What if in the future Western Europe will look more like Eastern Europe today and not the other way round? We do not suggest this as the most likely scenario but it cannot be completely excluded. The most likely outcome seems to us a new European culture influenced from the US as much as from Eastern Europe. Whether this is desirable from the point of view of the present population of Western Europe remains an open question.

What we can conclude from our analysis of culture with regard to 'Ostkompetenz' is that the assumption that members of societies neighboring the post-communist countries in the West have a cultural advantage in dealing with them – that is meant by 'Ostkompetenz' – has basically two roots:

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first the belief in the presence of a common history and, secondly, the relative strong economic ties of these countries to the communist bloc in the past. This holds especially true for countries like Finland and Austria. On the basis of our analysis, we suggest taking such claims very cautiously. If social structure plays the significant role in the formation of culture that we assume, then not much of common culture should have had a chance to survive from history. Another case is the more frequent dealing with communist institutions. This expertise is probably still available, but in organizations rather than in Germans, Finns, Austrians etc. as such. But also here one must be cautious, because doing business in the post-communist countries follows a new logic, even if sometimes the communist heritage can be noticed. Considering all this, 'Ost-kompetenz' gets a different meaning. It is an ability based on a general cross-cultural competence which everybody can acquire through experience, studies and careful observation. Most of all it demands a genuine interest in these societies which some years ago boldly decided to completely change their patterns of life (Langer and Feichtinger, 1997).

Social and cultural analysis are not the same. The one emphasises the 'structure', the other the 'meaning'. Cultural analysis can reveal hidden dimensions of social relations, but commonly does not explain their reproduction. An era in which cultural analysis is preferred to social analysis indicates a lack of interest in the moving forces of society. Instead the mind is occupied with the phenomenology of social life – with the meaning and not the purpose of relations. Though culture theory can consider long term guiding principles (e. g. rationality in the West), it is weak in explaining the circumstances of their realisation. Nevertheless socio-structural and culture analysis can complement each other, they are just different intellectual strategies on a continuum in the endeavor to understand human conduct and societies; the neglect of the one or the other will always limit the scope of cognition and consequently also the number of options to act upon. In this article we have tried to elaborate this with the example of the post-communist societies.

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ABOUT THE MUTUAL...

## O uzajamnoj ovisnosti socio-kulturnih promjena u istočnoj i zapadnoj Europi

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Ovaj je prilog posvećen međuovisnosti Istočne i Zapadne Europe u današnjim povijesnim zbivanjima. U njemu se naglašava značaj analitičkog razlikovanja društvenoga i kulturnoga, naglašavajući rastuće zanemarivanje društvenoga u teoriji i istraživanjima, posebno u odnosu na postkomunistička društva Istočne i Srednjoistočne Europe. Kako se u tim društvima upravo socijalna struktura najbrže mijenjala, teorijski uvidi u njezin odnos prema kulturi su vrlo značajni. Imajući na umu ovakav teorijski pristup, postaje bjelodano da svaka pretpostavka manje ili više jedinstvene Srednjoeuropske kulture ili, drugačije gledano, postkomunističkoga uma, mora navesti na pogrešan put. U pozadini obaju stavova može se naslutiti suviše holističko razumijevanje kulture. Ako pak s druge strane pretpostavimo da svaki kulturni obrazac zahtijeva određeno socio-strukturalno zaleđe, postkomunističko stanje se prije pojavljuje kao sklop različitih kulturnih dimenzija nego kao homogeni kulturni sustav ustrojen na temelju jedinstvenih načela.

## Über die Wechselwirkung der sozio-kulturellen Wandel in Ost- und Westeuropa

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Dieser Beitrag widmet sich der gegenseitigen Abhängigkeit Ost- und Westeuropas vor dem Hintergrund der aktuellen geschichtlichen Ereignisse. Es wird die Bedeutung der analytischen Unterscheidung von Gesellschaftlichem und Kulturellem betont und auf die wachsende Vernachlässigung des Gesellschaftlichen verwiesen, wie man sie in Theorie und Forschung vor allem in den postkommunistischen Gesellschaften Ost- und Mitteleuropas beobachten kann. Da in diesen Gesellschaften gerade die soziale Struktur einer beschleunigten Änderung ausgesetzt war, sind theoretische Einsichten in ihren Bezug zur Kultur äußerst wichtig. Wenn man einen solchen theoretischen Ansatz verfolgt, so wird klar, daß eine jegliche Voraussetzung einer mehr oder minder einheitlichen mitteleuropäischen Kultur oder, anders betrachtet, eines postkommunistischen Geistes irreführend ist. Beide der genannten Einstellungen lassen ein übertrieben holistisches Kulturverständnis vermuten. Setzt man nun andererseits aber wieder voraus, daß jedes Kulturparadigma das Bestehen eines bestimmten sozio-strukturellen Hintergrundes voraussetzt, so erscheint der postkommunistische Zustand eher als Komplex verschiedener Kulturdimensionen denn als homogenes, auf einheitlichen Grundsätzen fußendes Kultursystem.